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Mahathir-Partnership

M'SIA CALLS FOR THIRD WORLD SMART PARTNERSHIP

GABORONE (BOTSWANA), May 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on developing countries to form a smart partnership to create a united front to face the challenge of globalisation.

Dr Mahathir, often described as the spokesman for developing nations, said by exchanging experiences in economic management, they could learn to do what was right and avoid the mistakes they might have made.

"The only way that the weak can face any challenge is to present a united front, better still to form a smart partnership," he said addressing the First Southern Africa International Dialogue in Kasane, a retreat about 600km or an hour's flight from this capital of Botswana.

The three-day meeting, focusing on "Smart Partnership: Meeting the Challenges of Globalisation", is the second international dialogue to take off after the inaugural 1995 Langkawi International Dialogue. The first was last year's Barbados International Dialogue for Small Nation States.

The Kasane dialogue is being attended by several leaders of southern African nations, including Botswana president Sir Ketumile Masire and his Malawi counterpart Dr Bakili Muluzi.

Dr Mahathir said by sharing whatever little assets they have, developing nations could consolidate their strength.

"We live in an international jungle. There is no law and order in international relations. There is very little justice. The high and the mighty rules. The weak and the poor just have to lump it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said with all these "threats and obstructive actions", developing countries must now face the challenge of globalisation which, he said, has become the catchword of a new religion.

But he asked if the developing nations were in a state to face the challenge.

"Quite obviously not. But no one is going to wait for us to get ready for the challenge.

"So whether we like it or not, we have to face the challenge," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir also asked if the developing nations were truly independent because according to him, although direct occupation and political control has ended, it has been replaced by much more insidious forms of colonisation.

"Our politics, economy, social and behavioural systems are all still under the control, directly or indirectly, of the old colonial masters and the great powers," he said.

Dr Mahathir stressed that the developing nations' struggle for independence was far from over.

Calling the Group of Seven industrialised countries as "snooty", Dr Mahathir said they (the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Japan, Italy and Germany) would not condescend to talk with people outside their club except with Russia.

Expressing regret that the G-7 have totally ignored the developing countries, Dr Mahathir said: "They refuse to talk to the chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and to the Group of 15 developing countries or their representatives."

The Prime Minister said regional organisations too could form smart partnership so that "when faced with damaging proposals from the developed

North, the regional organisation can take a common stand".

"This we did at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Singapore (last year). And we prevailed," he said.

Dr Mahathir said smart partnership could take place between the government, private sector and trade unions as in the case of Malaysia.

He however warned that smart partnership was just one element in the formula for success.

"Systems and formulae by themselves cannot guarantee success. This is because other elements play a role and can effect the success or otherwise of a formula or system," he said.

He added smart partnership also depended on the environment, "not the trees and forests but the political and economic environment within the country and without, the culture and the value system of the people, and a lot of other minor elements". -- BERNAMA

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